

# Be Still and Listen to Your Child.

**T**urn off the TV or radio. Don't answer the phone. Give your child all of your attention. Take a quiet moment to talk to your child. Ask your child questions about her day, who she saw, what she did in school. Listen closely to her answers.

When your child talks, let her know you're listening by asking questions about what she is saying. Or repeat something she said to be sure you heard it right. If your child doesn't like to talk, just play and spend time doing something she likes to do.

Try not to "correct" her feelings or words, even if you don't agree with her. Wait. Try to understand first. Ask your child to say more about events that make her feel sad, scared, angry, or hurt. Try to find out why she feels the way she does. Let her know that these feelings are OK to have.



## AFFIRMATION

**When the heart overflows, it comes out through the mouth.**

*~ Ethiopian Proverb*



## Why are these activities important?

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Quiet time to talk and listen to your child can get you into the habit of coming together, just you and your child. Good habits can be hard to break. These activities will help your child to:

- ✓ Know it's OK to talk about feelings and emotions
- ✓ Name and describe her feelings
- ✓ Get used to talking to you, so that when there is a problem, she will feel at ease telling you about it

## Activity 1: All I need is love

This activity uses poetry as a way to talk to your child about her emotional needs. The poem describes positive and loving ways of parenting. It tells adults to think about what they do and say through the eyes of a child. The poem gives children the OK to think about what they need, and to tell their parents about those needs.

1. Read the poem on page 19 with your child.
2. Use these ideas to start talking to your child about the poem:
  - ✓ Ask your child what she thinks about the poem, and how it makes her feel. Tell your child which parts of the poem you thought were interesting or important.
  - ✓ Talk to your child about what living things need to grow and succeed. For example, most plants need water, soil/dirt, and sunlight to grow. Or, if your family has a pet, talk about the things your pet needs, like food, water, exercise, petting, and playing.
  - ✓ Ask your child to tell you what she needs to help her grow and succeed. Ask her to think about ways you can help meet these needs.
3. Go to an apple orchard, garden, petting zoo, or even a pet store with your child. Point out how the plants and animals in these places get what they need to grow.

OR

Help your child to plant a flower or plant in a pot. Make a checklist of things you and your child can do to help the plant grow. Keep the checklist where your child can see it. When your child does something on the list, like watering the plant, put a sticker or draw a smiley face on the list.

### What you need

- ✓ Poem on page 19
- ✓ Seeds, soil, and container for a plant (optional)

## REMEMBER

This activity is not about material “things” that your child may want. Instead, it’s trying to help your child feel at ease with her need for love and affection.

4. Write a short story together about your activity and put it a special place.
  - ✓ If your child is younger, let her tell you the story while you write it down.
  - ✓ For an older child, let her write the story down, or use a computer to record the story.

# WHAT I NEED

*By Paula Young Shelton*

*I need to have you hold me and let me know you care.  
I need to be let go to explore all that I dare.*

*I need you to set limits and always to be fair.  
I need you to be patient as I wander everywhere.*

*I need to make mistakes sometimes,  
under your watchful eye.  
I need a safe environment for the  
new things I will try.*

*I need to learn by doing. My learning looks like play.  
I need to know I can trust you  
and that you mean what you say.*

*I need to be corrected in a voice that's firm but low.  
I need to hear some other words besides just,  
"No! No! No!"*

*I need you to be consistent, so I always know  
what to expect.  
I need you to listen to me, 'cause even little ones  
need respect.*

*I need lots of attention. So don't get too upset.  
I need to ask lots of questions.  
There's so much I don't know yet.*

*But more than all of the above.  
What I really need is love.  
No matter what I do or say.  
I need to know you love me anyway.*





## What you need

- ✓ Writing and construction paper
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- ✓ Tape recorder, video camera

## REMEMBER

Your child will be more aware of what she is doing and will be better able to get her feelings across if you talk to her while she's doing an activity.

## Activity 2: Feelings

It's not easy to talk about how you feel. Many people find it easier to sing, rap, draw, or write about their feelings because they don't have to really tell someone what's going on inside. Acting feelings out can also make it easier to let others know how you feel. This activity gives children lots of safe, healthy, and creative ways to share their hopes, fears, and feelings.

1. Ask your child to pick out her favorite song. Listen to the song with your child. Talk about why she likes the song and how she feels when she listens to it.

OR

If your child likes drawing or painting, have her draw, color, or paint while listening to her favorite song to show how the music makes her feel.

2. Help your child to make up her own rap, song, or poem that puts how she feels into words. Help your child write down the words and put the new song or poem in a special place.

OR

If your child likes to act or play better than making something, watch her while she sings and performs her favorite song. Tape record or videotape her singing, if she wants you to. (You may want to save the tape as an item for a special treasure box activity described later in this book.)



### NOTE TO PARENTS

If your child says or draws things that bother you, try to understand, first. Take time to think about how you feel before saying anything to your child. If you need to, ask a trusted friend, a spiritual advisor, or a counselor for advice or guidance on what to say or do. Then, you may want to talk to your child about what's bothering you.